

Deputy of the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town.

Tracts 1532. (2)

REPORT

ON THE

SANITARY CONDITION & PUBLIC HEALTH

OF

Mile End Old Town

FOR

THE YEAR ENDING MARCH THE 30TH, 1867,

BY

MATTHEW CORNER, M.D.,

Officer of Health.



LONDON

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1867.



REPORT.

TO THE

VESTRY OF THE HAMLET OF MILE END OLD TOWN.

GENTLEMEN,

In this Report, I purpose to review briefly, the proceedings of the health department of the Vestry, during the year ending March, 1867; to notice the present sanitary condition of the Hamlet, and to make passing allusion to, or comments upon, any subject of interest to the public health. I have prepared tables in a way which I consider will give you, at a glance, a clear insight as to the births and deaths for the year, compared with previous years, and the relative rates of births and deaths compared with other places. I have prepared a special table for deaths from zymotic diseases, as it is by their variation, rise or fall, that we can best judge of the results produced by our sanitary measures.

At each meeting of the Committee, I have presented and read Reports upon the current mortality and sanitary condition of the Hamlet, upon subjects continually arising of importance to the general health—such as nuisances dangerous to health, or supposed to be so, and upon numerous special matters, which it is neither necessary nor desirable, in all cases to particularize. I will only allude, in the course of this report, to those of greatest general interest. By the Report of the Inspector of Nuisances, appended to this, you will see

that an amount of work (comprising a total of 5603 orders issued and completed) unprecedented in any previous year, or probably number of years, has been effected in that department.

Altogether, I think you will consider that a large amount of good work has been done, and if we may judge of its necessity and effects by the mortality from zymotic diseases, especially during the second half of the year, (Table III.), then all the sanitary measures have been fully justified, and their effects eminently satisfactory.

It is not necessary that I should specially refer to the Cholera epidemic of last year, having already presented a special report thereon.

Births and General Mortality.

Table I. shows the total number of births and deaths for the year, with and without cholera, and for four preceding years. The births are above the average, though slightly lower than the year immediately preceding; the latter circumstance may be reasonably attributed to the epidemic of last year.

The excess of births over deaths (including cholera) for the year ending March, 1867, was 809, and of 1488 over what would have been the normal mortality, in the absence of cholera. The birth rate upon the population of the Hamlet was 3.753 per cent.; the rate for the whole of England was 3.537 per cent., proving the birth rate of Mile End about one quarter per cent., higher than that for the whole country. In addition to this, the population of the Hamlet has been very largely and respectably increased by immigration, as shown by the occupation of vast numbers of new houses which have been built. All this proves what I have

often before repeated, that judicious expenditure in effective sanitary measures is returned with large interest, by salubrity and low rates, inevitably attracting better tenants and higher rents.

To give a fair and clear idea of the mortality, it was necessary to distinguish the exceptional deaths from cholera, from those produced by all other causes ; at the same time I have retained among the latter the deaths from the diarrhœa, usually prevalent at certain periods of the year.

Thus we find the total ordinary mortality of last year was 135 below the average of the four preceding years. The unprecedentedly healthy condition of the Hamlet for the six months ending June last, has no doubt greatly contributed to the favourable result. It would be during this period that the sanitary measures previously initiated and carried out, would produce their beneficial effects. This must be very gratifying to the members of the Committee of the Vestry, through whom such measures were accomplished, as in all human probability the greatest of all good works was thereby achieved, that of preserving health and saving life.

Table II. gives a comparison of the number of deaths from zymotic diseases during the whole year, and for four previous years. The number for the past year is 132 below the average for the four previous years ; but to give a clearer idea of the mortality in the Hamlet from this class of diseases, I have prepared a table (III.) showing the death rate, per 1,000 living, from all causes, and zymotic diseases separately, in Mile End and the five Metropolitan districts. In both classes we contrast most favourably with the other districts, being much lower than all, except the west districts, which are only fractionally lower than Mile End.

TABLE II.

Deaths in Mile End Old Town from all Zymotic Diseases, viz., Fever, Small Pox, Scarlatina, Measles, Diphtheria, Diarrhœa, Dysentery, Whooping Cough, Croup, Erysipelas, in year ending March, 1867, and in four previous years ending—

March, 1863	March, 1864	March, 1865	March, 1866	March, 1867	Average Four previous years.
477	522	507	421	349	481

As I have already stated, zymotic diseases are the best test of the sanitary condition of any place where any large numbers of people are massed together, hence, this table is both gratifying and interesting.

TABLE III.

Annual death rates from all causes (and from zymotic diseases) per 1,000 persons living in Mile End Old Town, and in each of the five Metropolitan districts, for the two quarters ending March and June, 1867.

Quarter ending March 30th.			Quarter ending June 29th.	
Estimated Population, 1867.	All causes	Zymotic Diseases.	All causes.	Zymotic Diseases.
Mile End Old Town 85,000 ...	22·80	2·8	18·44	2·4
For Metropolis—				
West Districts 560,000	22·34	2·56	17·0	2·08
North „ 710,000	26·71	4·46	20·0	3·24
Central „ 320,000	31·87	3·97	24·0	3·08
East (Including M.E.O.T.) 635,000	26·44	4·0	20·37	3·2
South Districts 820,000	27·44	3·4	21·2	·8
Mean of Districts...	26·96	3·4	20·51	2·8

Mortality of Infants.

Table IV. shows the number of deaths at different ages, the period between birth and five years of age gives as usual an excessive and disproportionate number over all other periods. Popularly this result is accepted as a matter of course, the idea being that children must in some preordained or conventional way, have measles, whooping-cough or scarlatina, in obedience to laws as immutable as that by which they cut their teeth; in other words that the germs of these fatal diseases are congenital and born in the flesh; such views are, I believe, entirely fallacious; constitutional diseases, such as consumption, arising in an abnormal and defective condition of the integral constituents of the body are so inherited by the infant and afterwards developed into fatal disease; but that the specific and active blood poisons of the infantile diseases referred to, which incubate, develop and exhaust themselves in a few days, should remain dormant in the system for an indefinite period and then suddenly become active, is a theory quite untenable.

I have been induced to make these observations owing to having been frequently asked whether these infantile diseases were not dependent upon natural and inevitable laws.

I cannot, within the limits of a report of this kind, enter into a detailed discussion of such questions, but only allude to and express a passing opinion upon them in their relation to vital statistics, still it would not be justifiable to pass without special notice that portion which constitutes half the total mortality of the country. If it were possible to exclude and preserve children from the producing causes of infantile diseases by which they are surrounded directly they are born, they would

TABLE IV.

Mortality at different ages, in Mile End Old Town, during the year ending March 1867.

FROM										
	0 to 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 to 30	30 to 40	40 to 50	50 to 60	60 to 70	70 and upwards.
1866.										
April to June.	229	23	4	8	32	27	37	34	37	54
July to September Including Cholera.	387	39	29	22	64	105	91	80	62	71
Oct. to Dec.	184	14	5	9	24	29	45	36	42	68
1867.										
January to March.	185	13	5	12	29	36	38	41	56	71
TOTALS	985	89	43	51	149	197	211	191	197	264*

* Forty-six people died during the year ending March, 1867, at ages between 80 and 97, the average being 86½.

remain free from those diseases, and then after arriving at adult life suddenly place the same individuals within the influence of such causes, they would be just as susceptible to the diseases as in childhood—of course there are other causes which contribute to this excessive infantile mortality, but I only allude to those which come within the legitimate sphere of preventive medicine.

When the diseases are not fatal they may leave behind them such a condition of the system as will be most damaging to the constitution of the future man probably for generations to come. Therefore, to elucidate and eradicate the causes of this class of infantile diseases is to strike at the roots of the greatest and most insidious enemies to health and life, and they are unquestionably amenable to preventive measures.

Zymotic Diseases and Sanitary Measures.

By Table II. it will be seen that the number of deaths during the year from preventible diseases was nearly one fourth the total mortality of the Hamlet.

In all cases of zymotic diseases which have come under my notice, I have, when necessary, directed printed notices, under the provisions of the Public Health Act, 1866, to be sent, requiring the premises, or part thereof, to be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected. [*See next page for copy of the order.*]

As will be seen by the Inspector's return, 107 such orders have been issued during a period of about six months. The Inspectors inform me that in nearly every instance the orders have been well carried out, and in only two or three instances have objections been made or opposition raised and referred to me, and in those cases a courteous explanation of the objects desired has been sufficient to cause a ready acquiescence therein.



HAMLET OF MILE END OLD TOWN.

TO THE OCCUPIER of the House being
in the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town, in the County of Middlesex.

Infectious disease having occurred or at present existing in your house, you are required, under the Provisions of the Public Health Act of 1866, to forthwith have the rooms of such house thoroughly cleansed and disinfected. The ceilings and walls to be cleansed, and, where practicable, limewhited—the floors and other woodwork to be washed with water and chloride of lime or carbolate of lime—(when purchased, chloride of lime should be *dry*, and of a greyish white color). The bed clothes and linen of the patient, and all soiled articles, to be placed as speedily as possible in boiling water and there left until cold—all discharges from the patient must be immediately disinfected with “Burnett’s Fluid,” or “carbolic acid” and directly thrown away. The rooms and the house generally to be thoroughly ventilated as often as possible by open doors and windows. Where sickness is at the time in the house, the medical attendant should be consulted as to these measures of disinfection.

If further instructions are required they can be obtained upon application at the Vestry Hall, Bancroft Road.

Dated this

day of

1867.

By Order of the Vestry,

HENRY LESHAW,

SANITARY INSPECTOR.

VESTRY HALL, BANCROFT ROAD,
MILE END ROAD.

I am fully aware that owing to a prejudice felt by many against these measures resulting from ignorance of their value and objects, they must be carried into effect judiciously and with much tact and discretion; this course has always been my aim, to ensure that the sanitary measures are efficiently carried out, without at the same time creating opposition or annoyance to owner or occupier by unreasonable or impossible demands. I believe this system has been most effective

in staying the progress of diseases by destroying their infectious properties in the places where they had become fixed. Recently in the West Ward of this Hamlet, where fever has been very prevalent for several months, I have observed many marked instances of the success of the course pursued, whereas in houses in which such measures had not been adopted the disease continued to extend.

Overcrowding, Ventilation, &c.

There can be no doubt that these diseases have their exciting causes, and their remote origin too, in the evils attendant upon overcrowding and uncleanness producing specific blood poisoning, thus inflicting upon us a fatal penalty for ignoring the fundamental and even instinctive hygienic laws of nature.

The most complete system of drainage and water supply with every other sanitary accessory would be rendered useless by a continuance and disregard of the evils referred to. Of course much may be done in mitigation by improved methods of ventilation, but in calm weather and in winter, when every means of ingress for air is cut off to retain necessary warmth, nothing short of a hurricane would suffice to displace and renew the air in the houses of the "built in" old courts and streets which exist in all large towns.

With a belt of air 40 miles in depth surrounding the earth, surely it is the refinement of cruelty to restrict its supply within limits which we know to be not only injurious, but ruinous to the health and well-being of present and future generations. If the enormous supply of air above mentioned should ever prove insufficient, no doubt the credulity of the public would be equal, as is proposed in the case of water, to contribute the means

for a supply being brought from an indefinite distance, so there need be no fear on the ground of the Metropolitan supply of air becoming exhausted. We are most solicitous to avoid the consumption of unsound or adulterated food, which is consumed only at intervals, but the air we are incessantly breathing, is permitted to be consumed impure and poisoned in quality, and restricted and utterly deficient in quantity, although a pure and inexhaustible supply is provided for all. The effect of respiring this poisonous air is to produce prostration of the vital energies and want of power to resist the attacks of disease. A labouring man sleeping, or rather narcotizing, with his wife and family in a room allowing from 50 to 150 cubic feet of air to each person, and without the most ordinary provision for ventilation, becomes totally unfitted for his work, and unable, however willing, to bring to his aid sufficient vigour and spirit to attempt to raise himself and family from their condition of poverty, misery and dependence. In this way the statistics of pauperism are increased, several instances of which, through the deaths of heads of families, I have already seen in this Hamlet. These questions of overcrowding, and consequent deficient and impure air supply, are therefore the most important subjects which I can urge, and it is my duty to do so, upon your consideration, as the legitimate and responsible guardians of the public health. Mile End is not an exception to all other large communities, in having densely packed populations and squalid poverty in certain localities, existence in which only proves the tenacity of human life under the most adverse and pernicious influences.

The supply of air according to the space is often insufficient to sustain life for a single day, and but for

its adventitious and accidental ingress, sudden deaths would occur instead of being preceded by prolonged illness; indeed, doubtless many mysterious sudden deaths are attributable to this cause.

These conditions, if they cannot be completely remedied, can, by earnest efforts, be largely ameliorated without injury to the interests of any and with great benefit to all.

I am fully conscious of the difficulties in the way of a speedy and perfect remedy for these evils, but seeing that they are literally the cause of so much disease and death, I think we ought, so far as we may reasonably be expected, endeavour to mitigate them, and to this end we can do much. Legislation would be the most effectual, as it would be the most just means for dealing with a large question like this, and which it would be impossible for individuals to meet with more than partial success; moreover it is a condition for which they are not wholly responsible. It is impossible for an officer of health to ensure success for the means he employs to promote the health of a community under his charge, with such enemies as overcrowded and unhealthy dwellings to contend against, unless some means for the amelioration of such evils are within his reach; but I repeat that with earnest and sincere efforts, we can, even with the inadequate means now at our disposal, do much to mitigate the dangers of such conditions.

Small-pox and Vaccination.

In common with the rest of the Metropolis, indeed with the whole country, small-pox has been epidemic in the Hamlet, but has now almost entirely abated.

In the course of my enquiries I found there were a great number of unvaccinated children above one year of age, among whom the severity and fatality of the disease was much greater than in those who had been vaccinated. I found several instances of this clear evidence in favor of efficient vaccination, in the same families where sometimes all, and in others most of the members thereof were attacked with small pox, some mildly, others severely, and some fatally, the degree being influenced by previous vaccination or non-vaccination. I communicated with the Guardians recommending increased facilities for vaccination by establishing temporary vaccine stations in all the poorest districts, but in view of the impending legislation upon the subject, it was deemed better to defer any action until the result was known (*see Report to the Committee.*) By the kindness of the Guardians the patients' books of the Union Medical Officers are placed at my disposal, so that I can, at any time, ascertain if infectious disease is prevalent in any district of the Hamlet, and adopt measures accordingly.

The number of new cases of all kinds attended by the Union Medical Officers during the thirteen weeks ending June 29th, 1867, were 2142, of these 478 were cases of zymotic diseases.

Table V. shows the numbers of deaths from all causes in the Hamlet during the year ending March, 1867.

Of the 349 deaths from ordinary zymotic diseases in the year ending March, 1867, 287 occurred in the same streets, places, &c., as those for the previous year, a list of which is appended to my Cholera Report of last year.

TABLE V.

Mortality from all causes during the year ending March 30th, 1867.

CAUSES.	Number of Deaths.
1 Fever.....	60
2 Small Pox	44
3 Measles	58
4 Scarlatina	56
5 Cynanche Maligna and Diphtheria	9
6 Diarrhœa of Adults	63
7 Diarrhœa of Children under three years of age.....	90
8 Cholera	439
9 Dysentery	11
10 Whooping Cough	56
11 Croup, Laryngitis	31
12 Erysipelas	11
13 Diseases of Abdominal Organs, not included in Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 9	87
14 Bronchitis, Pleuritis, and Pneumonia	188
15 Bronchitis and Pneumonia of Infants under 3 years	133
16 Dentition	117
17 Hydrocephalus, and convulsions of Infants	103
18 Dropsy	41
19 Cancer	23
20 Hernia	3
21 Diseased heart and large Vessels	86
22 Apoplexy, Paralysis, and other diseases of the brain	140
23 Pyæmia, and Puerperal fever, Uterine hemorrhage	12
24 Premature birth and debility from birth.....	74
25 Violence, Privation and Poison	54
26 Natural decay	148
27 Other diseases, chiefly chronic	84
28 Phthisis.....	124
29 Exhaustion	3
30 Other causes.....	4

Water supply.

With regard to the water supply in the Hamlet it has been ample and the quality equal to, and often superior, to that of the other London companies, as shown by the frequent analyses of both Professors LETHEBY and FRANKLAND.

There have been a few complaints of deficient supply, but these have been satisfactorily attended to upon my application to the Company. The principal defect under the present intermittent system is the absence of a Sunday supply. This is more especially felt in some of the poorer districts, where the water is not turned on until late in the day on Mondays.

This evil is greatly aggravated, and indeed mainly caused, by want of sufficient and proper receptacles for storage, the result being that a great excess more water is wasted than used. The essential and only satisfactory condition is a constant and pure supply—water, next to air, is Nature's greatest antiseptic and purifier. If all supplied was properly used, it would go far to destroy or prevent the evils produced by some of the causes already alluded to. The greater absence of impurity from the water of the East London Company has been shown by the periodical analyses but of course the public will not submit to a continuance of the present sewage contamination of the London waters any longer than will be required for the application of the means of prevention, and a constant and pure supply is the only allowable condition of surrender.

Wherever practicable the Committee have ordered water waste preventers to be provided, this is tantamount to a constant supply.

New Dwelling Houses.

I have reported upon the danger caused by building new houses upon ground or waste lands previously unprepared for the purpose. Many open places now built, or being built upon in this Hamlet, have been for years the receptacles for all kinds of animal and vegetable refuse, and have become thoroughly impregnated with the products of their decomposition, houses are built thereon, and the result to the health of the occupants may be imagined and is daily realized by the excessive numbers of zymotic diseases and deaths which occur in them. Such foundations should be properly prepared by previous drainage and other means, to prevent the exhalation of miasmata from the ground into the houses. My report to the Committee upon this subject was suggested when it was proposed to build houses upon some ground in East Street, for years used as the receptacle for all kinds of organic refuse.

Finding there was no Act of Parliament containing any provision to prevent this evil, I sent a copy of my Report to the Building Act Committee of the Metropolitan Board.

I may mention as interesting to residents of East London and all interested in saving Epping Forest from destruction, that similar objections apply to building dwelling houses upon recently cleared forest lands. Woods and forests are highly conducive to the health of inhabited districts for miles around, but once cleared the land gives forth its previously pent up pestiferous malaria, being transformed from a source of safety and protection to a focus of danger to health; this consideration ought to have been sufficient to prevent any portion of the Forest being cleared, and should now check further progress in such a course.

Another great source of the unhealthiness of large towns, consists in building long uninterrupted lines of houses and squares, in a way utterly regardless of the principles and influence of ventilation, the surrounding air being completely enclosed, and often hopelessly stagnant. Public institutions and large hospitals are very often unhealthy and dangerous to patients, from this cause. The London Hospital is an example of this system, and the mischief has been increased by the position of the new wing. Such buildings should be built in detached portions.

Diseased Food and Adulteration.

Several cases of dealing in unsound or diseased meat intended for human consumption have been discovered and the meat destroyed under the supervision of the Inspectors. In one instance the offender was also convicted in a penalty. There is no doubt much of this traffic going forward, but it is difficult to detect, owing to every means of deception and seerecy being practised. In addition to being a cruel robbery of the poor, it is a source of much illness among them, and the Vestry should insist upon the evil being suppressed to the utmost possible extent.

Adulteration of food, though it may not be so directly injurious to health as diseased meat, still from the large scale upon which it is practised, must, in many instances, be seriously prejudicial. Local Boards have not yet adopted any definite system in regard to its prevention. To deal effectually with the subject would require considerable time and a somewhat elaborate machinery. I believe adulteration of food is much encouraged by the excessive demand for all articles included under the name of "luxuries," and to supply them in a pure state

is beyond all present productive power. This general custom of adulteration often explains the cause of many small and mysterious manufactories which we so frequently discover, where least expected, in crowded and obscure neighbourhoods. One of these little industries is very common, and consists in rendering all kinds of refuse, fat and dripping, the product of which, under the alterative influence of a voyage from Brewer's Quay, London, to Rotterdam and back, undergoes transmutation into Prime Dutch Butter. The "Presiding Genius" of this same Quay could make interesting revelations with respect to the chemistry of many articles of human food, both liquid and solid, producing an impression upon the mind of the very successful application to the science of human food of the ancient art of Alchemy.

Cow and Slaughter Houses.

Accompanied by the Inspector I examined the slaughter and cow houses in the Hamlet; the latter were 23 in number, containing, at that time, the very limited number of 253 animals. In my report to the Committee I stated that, with one exception, the cow-barns were totally unfitted for the purposes used. There is no ventilation where most required, near the heads of the animals; and owing to the places immediately abutting upon private grounds, yards, &c., this defect could not be remedied. The animals are, therefore, continually respiring a poisoned atmosphere, so that it is impossible for them to be healthy, and lung disease, rinderpest, etc., are the necessary results from the blood poisoning. Generally the places were kept clean, but many orders were issued for cleansing and improving the drainage (*see report to Committee*).

Of the slaughter-houses it is only necessary to say that, owing to restrictions imposed on account of the Cattle Plague, they were very little used, were clean, and well ventilated; some defects in drainage were ordered to be remedied.

I have now placed before you the more important subjects which I have from time to time reported upon to the Committee, whose duties are so onerous in relation to the public health; and, I trust, from this report that the Vestry will be enabled to form a fair estimate of the sanitary condition and state of the public health in the Hamlet.

I have the honour to remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient Servant,

M. CORNER, M.D., &c.,

Officer of Health for Mile End Old Town.

VESTRY HALL,

JULY, 1867.

Inspector's Return of Nuisances removed under his supervision during the year ending March, 1867.

Cesspools emptied	976
Connections made with the Sewer, and Closets panned and trapped	1097
Water supplied to Closets	457
Water supplied to houses from the main	30
Traps provided to drains	1320
Accumulations of dung, refuse, &c., removed	96
Removals of Swine	54
Houses cleansed	130
Houses cleansed and disinfected by order of the Officer of Health, in consequence of infectious diseases having occurred therein.....	107
Infected bedding destroyed by order of the Officer of Health, and value allowed.....	36
Dust removed under the supervision of additional Inspectors during prevalence of Cholera (loads)	1300

Numerous complaints have been made during the year respecting nuisances from various businesses, factories or works, these have been attended to, and in nearly all cases the causes of complaint mitigated or suppressed; others are still under supervision.

HENRY LESIAW.

